HB592

168288-1

By Representatives Butler, Farley, Wingo, Ainsworth, Nordgren, Ball, Fridy, Wood, McCutcheon and Rich

RFD: Education Policy

First Read: 30-APR-15
SYNOPSIS: This bill would require the State Board of Education, local boards of education, and staff of K-12 public schools to create an environment that encourages students to explore scientific questions, learn about scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills, and respond appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about scientific subjects.

This bill would also allow public school teachers to help students understand, analyze, critique, and review the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of all existing scientific theories covered in a science course.

A BILL

TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

Relating to the teaching of science in public schools; to encourage students in K-12 public schools to
explore scientific questions, learn about scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills, and respond appropriately and respectfully to differences of opinion about scientific subjects; and to allow teachers to help students understand, analyze, critique, and review the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of all existing scientific theories covered in a science course.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

Section 1. (a) The Legislature finds that an important purpose of science education is to inform students about scientific evidence and to help students develop critical thinking skills necessary to become intelligent, productive, and scientifically informed citizens. The teaching of some scientific subjects required to be taught under the curriculum framework developed by the State Board of Education may cause debate and disputation including, but not limited to, biological evolution, the chemical origins of life, and human cloning. Some teachers may be unsure of the expectation concerning how they should present information when debate and disputation occur on these subjects.

(b) The State Board of Education, local boards of education, public school superintendents, public school principals, public school administrators, and public school teachers shall endeavor to create an environment within K-12 public schools that encourages students to explore scientific questions, learn about scientific evidence, develop critical thinking skills, and respond appropriately and respectfully to
differences of opinion about scientific subjects required to be taught under the curriculum framework developed by the State Board of Education.

(c) The State Board of Education, local boards of education, public school superintendents, public school principals, and public school administrators shall endeavor to assist teachers to find effective ways to present the science curriculum framework developed by the State Board of Education as it addresses scientific subjects that may cause debate and disputation.

(d) Neither the State Board of Education nor any local board of education, public school superintendent, public school principal, or public school administrator shall prohibit any teacher of a public school from helping students understand, analyze, critique, and review in an objective manner the scientific strengths and scientific weaknesses of all existing scientific theories covered in the course being taught within the curriculum framework developed by the State Board of Education.

(e) This section only protects the teaching of scientific information, and shall not be construed to promote any religious doctrine, promote discrimination for or against a particular set of religious beliefs or promote discrimination for or against a religion.

Section 2. Not later than the start of the 2015-2016 school year, the State Department of Education shall notify all superintendents of K-12 public schools of the provisions
of this act. Each superintendent shall notify all employees within the superintendent's school system of the provisions of this act.

Section 3. This act shall become effective immediately following its passage and approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.